

## **Testimony to the Little Hoover Commission on Proposition 36**

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Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences and my feelings about Prop. 36.

First, I want to express my total gratitude for Prop. 36. Because of it, I got the opportunity to take advantage of treatment (as opposed to incarceration) for the first time in my life. I am now in long-term recovery, and I have not used drugs or alcohol for almost three years. My clean and sober day is September 21, 2004.

Today I have a life of being accountable, responsible and empathetic towards others, being of service and carrying the message of treatment and recovery.

Before Prop. 36, I had been using drugs (especially heroin) and alcohol for 30 years. When I was 14, I was arrested for the first time for drug possession. I was arrested many more times after that, and served time in jail and prison. The last time I was arrested, also for drug possession, I was 40. I got Prop. 36 and it was the first time I was entered treatment.

Today I'm enjoying life and becoming a proud productive member of society. I am working in treatment as a case manager, actually for the treatment program I went through (People in Progress in Sun Valley). I am currently attending college at Pierce in Woodland Hills, furthering my education in the profession of Drug and Alcohol Treatment with the goal of becoming a Certified Chemical Dependency Counselor. I am a sitting board member of a Neighborhood Council in the city of Sun Valley. And I am an active member of Narcotics Anonymous.

I am also a son, father and grandfather. I won't say that my mother ever lost hope that one day she would get her son back. She always accepted the fact that I had a problem and all she could do was pray for me and hope that I would "clean" up my act. Today, through the grace of God, she has gotten the chance to see me grow more in these three years than in the 40 years prior to Prop. 36 and treatment.

Before I went to treatment, my daughter never really had a father to speak of. All she knew was a "Dad" that came in and out of her life, pretty much since she was born. She lost her mother at just 18-months-old, and of course I was incarcerated. My daughter is 22 yrs young today and has blessed me with three beautiful grandchildren, Pattie, Jasmine and Robert. I am proud to say that my daughter now has a father she can count on, and her children have a grandfather.

I want to say more about my experience in Prop. 36. When I first chose Prop. 36, I think I was ready for a break, so that I could figure out how to control my problem. I didn't really know what treatment or recovery was.

I started in outpatient, and I can tell you for an addict like myself, it did not work. I was told to call the assessment (CASC) office upon my release from court. As an active addict at the time, let me just say this was not at the top of my to-do list. I called a day later, and left a message. I did this a couple of more times over about a week until I finally got to talk to someone. I let them know I was to enroll in an outpatient program. But from the time of my release (early January) to my start date in treatment (early March), it was way too long for me.

I made it to treatment, but it wasn't right for me at first. In outpatient, I relapsed several times because drug abuse was a part of my being for many, many years. I just wasn't getting the support or the change I needed. By April, I was requesting inpatient treatment.

I am proud to say that I have been drug and alcohol free since the day I got to People in Progress, via a detox center.

Prop. 36 presented an opportunity for me to actually have a life. This in turn, presented to me a chance for recovery which consists of the tools I never had for how to confront my "dis-ease" of addiction. Recovery has changed me, in that I know now that everyday life problems are not solved by picking up and using or drinking. Recovery has introduced me to people that have a passion for all that is good in life. The bottom line is that treatment has introduced me to me.